WHERE 8,000,000 PEOPLE LIVE TOGETHER

an account of a force in the community

THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

WHERE 8,000,000 PEOPLE LIVE TOGETHER

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THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY

NEW YORK, the State, the Nation must become a better place, a more perfect place to live in, work in, play in—for you, your family, your friends and neighbors.

We Americans live in a democracy, the highest social expression of justice, fair play and equal opportunity. But this does not mean that American society has realized perfection. Perfection cannot be so readily achieved, particularly, where men and women entertain a variety of ideals and a diversity of opinions.

We can help make things better; we can alter certain conditions that run counter to the principles on which American democracy was founded.

We can help to create a climate of public opinion in which there can be fostered improvements and changes for the better.

Who with the interest of American democracy at heart does not desire the elimination of prejudice and discrimination against various groups in our midst? The American Jewish Committee like many groups and individuals is dedicated to uprooting these evils, so that all groups may enjoy the security and opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and for the sake of a finer, stronger American society.

This is a big order, isn't it? Bigger than anything which you,

your family, your friends and neighbors can hope to achieve as individuals, or even as members of a neighborhood civic league, a local parent-teachers association, or a center group.

A democracy cannot remain static. Its very nature is dynamic and progressive and it is therefore a responsibility of all its citizens in high or humble places.

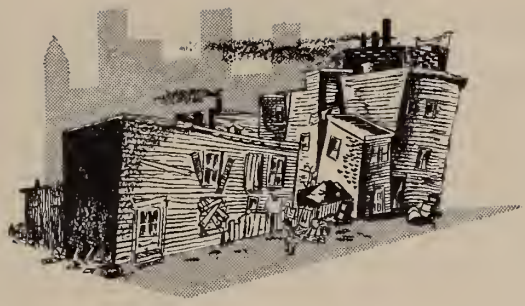
This responsibility, you as an American and a Jew, must assume with the eagerness befitting the great benefits and privileges you enjoy in this democratic society. But translating responsibility into effective activity is another matter.

In this sense of obligation and desire to act for the improvement of American society, democracy is everywhere at hand. It exists in the remotest hamlet as well as in the greatest city. It exists in your neighborhood, in the house you live, in your place of business or occupation, in the schools, parks and playgrounds your children attend and use.

It is in these institutions, in which men and women live, work and enjoy leisure, recreation and educational opportunities, where the blights of prejudice and discrimination are made plainly visible, and subject the foundation of American democracy to its heaviest strains. A sacred trust is imposed on all Americans who enjoy the benefits of democracy to help in eradicating evils so close to home and so pernicious, ultimately, to the future of America.

The existence of prejudice and discrimination is one of the most divisive factors in American life, and is particularly deplorable at the present time when the United States requires absolute national unity in the face of the most severe challenge to its security in its history.

There are people who do not understand that prejudice and discrimination not only victimize certain groups but destroy the fabric of American life. They fail to understand that prejudice and discrimination are responsible, in part, for such phenomena



as slums, crime and unemployment. The epochal American Jewish Committee sponsored "Studies in Prejudice" reveals that prejudice scars and distorts the personality of the bigot as well as his victim.

When you do not actively challenge prejudice and discrimination, you give unwitting sanction to their injurious effects. It is the quiescence of many groups and individuals in America that has made it possible for small groups of hate-mongers to sow dissension in a nation made up of 160 national and ethnic groups, belonging to some 60 religious sects.

The balance sheet of prejudice and discrimination reveals that the credit side has increased greatly and this has been made possible by the devotion and efforts expended by a vast number of groups and individuals.

New York City today is a better and more harmonious community despite the possibilities of tension latent in the existence of so many racial, religious and ethnic groups. This is so only because for many years, thousands of thoughtful New Yorkers, Jews and non-Jews, have turned the existence of such groups to advantage and have utilized the values inherent in such diversity to give to New York a richly cosmopolitan character.

In this work, thousands of members of the New York Chapter of the American Jewish Committee have participated and are continuing to participate. Can you afford to miss the opportunity of joining in their efforts?

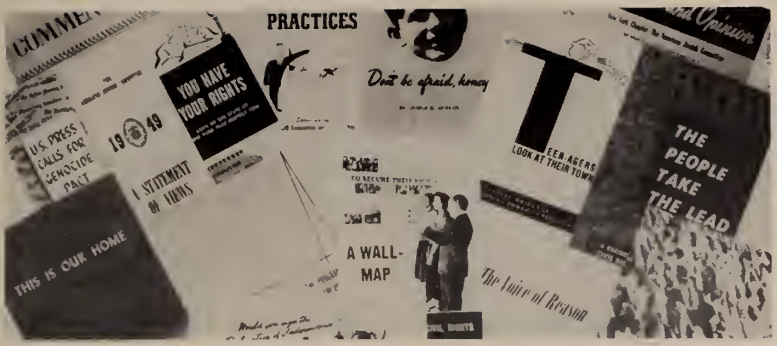
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE: PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

MOST Americans have some knowledge of the American Jewish Committee. If nothing else, they at least associate it with such illustrious names as Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler, Joseph M. Proskauer and Jacob Blaustein.

If they are at all cognizant of past American Jewish life, they are aware of the early contributions of the American Jewish Committee to the welfare and protection of Jews throughout the world, such as, the mobilization of world public opinion against outrages like the Kishinev massacre; the Mendel Beilis ritual murder trial; the first work of relieving suffering among Jews during World War I; the securing of guarantees in the peace treaties at the conclusion of that war protecting the rights of all those "who differ from the majority of the population in race, language or religion."

Currently, most American Jews recognize with distinct pride the American Jewish Committee's work in detecting, exposing and combatting organized anti-Semitic movements; in seeking just restitution for the Jewish victims of Nazism; in campaigning for fair and just legislation which would aid Jewish displaced persons and other European Jews to emigrate; in promoting international covenants for the protection of human rights in the United Nations.

The American Jew is also deeply aware and appreciative of the American Jewish Committee's activities in behalf of Palestine and Israel. The Committee has given constant cooperation to every effort by world Jewry since the Balfour Declaration to make the Holy Land a safe and secure haven. It has opposed every effort by the British mandatory power to limit immigration and land purchase in Palestine by Jews. It gave eloquent testimony on behalf of the United Nations' resolution to parti-



tion Palestine into viable Jewish and Arab States. It has given constructive counsel and firm support to the fledgling state of Israel.

While giving the fullest measure of support to Israel, the Committee has been instrumental in educating Jews to the realities of the relationships of American and Israeli Jews. The Committee has firmly maintained that American Jews have no political attachments to Israel, that "this (America) is our home." This concept has been reaffirmed by Israel's Premier David Ben-Gurion and the Committee's president, Jacob Blaustein, in declarations released throughout the world.

The American Jewish Committee is primarily concerned with the protection of the civil and religious rights of Jews at home and abroad. However, the American Jewish Committee has recognized for a long time that anti-Semitism is inseparable from general group hostility and the Committee therefore works to prevent the employment of prejudice and discrimination against any group. The American Jewish Committee is firmly convinced that such discrimination and hostility endanger not only American society but ultimately threaten the peace of the world.

Consequently, the American Jewish Committee aims at the preservation and strengthening of civil, religious and human rights for all Americans. It seeks security and dignity not only for Jews but for all people, regardless of race, creed or ancestry.

As Judge Proskauer, honorary president of the Committee,

has put it: "For America that goal is a land that is democratic in life and action as it is in constitution and promise; for the rest of the world, the creation of a new life in which Jews, as all others may abide in peace and in honor. To the achievements of these great ideals we consecrate our spirit and dedicate our lives."

To translate these ideals into practical reality, the American Jewish Committee conducts a program of operations whose specific purpose, as described by Dr. John Slawson, executive vice-president, is: "to show a way of evolving harmonious relations among the varied and diverse groups in the United States that constitute our American democracy; to discover and to develop procedures to promote intergroup understanding and satisfying group associations, and to be in the forefront for the integration of the American community and the promotion of national unity."

This program of education is carried on unremittingly and reaches into the homes, fields, factories, schools, churches, temples, synagogues and theatres of America. Every conceivable modern medium of communication is utilized to spread this program. Its message of democracy can be heard on a children's program, or a Town Hall discussion, in a radio drama or a disc jockey's patter; its message is wrought into movies and television programs, into pulps and comic books, into great metropolitan dailies and farmers journals, into slick magazines and "high-brow" periodicals.

The voice of the American Jewish Committee directed against prejudice and discrimination, and raised to champion human rights and fundamental freedoms, can be heard not only in the American legislative halls but in the councils of the U.N.

This voice is the blend of the many voices that form the membership of the American Jewish Committee. It is a voice that becomes daily more powerful with the constant growth of membership from coast-to-coast. The thousands of members of the New York Chapter give tremendous impetus to the effort to spread the message of the American Jewish Committee, while constituting an autonomous voice in local operations.

WORKING WITH AIM AND PURPOSE

THE New York Chapter is composed of men and women drawn from all walks of life, and who through a variety of working committees in the Chapter, become engaged in such fields as intergroup relations, civil rights, and community service. The committees of the New York Chapter have worked for the following objectives:

. . . to create equal opportunity for all people in housing, employment and education.

. . . to create more opportunities for more people in colleges and professional schools.

. . . to help local neighborhoods to help themselves combat group tensions.

. . . to stimulate popular understanding of civil rights and intergroup living.

. . . to provide educational activities for the membership of the New York Chapter and for the general community.

The committees of the New York Chapter while embracing those aims and purposes serve yet another function. They are a guarantee that each and every member of the New York Chapter can enjoy the opportunity of giving his talents and energies the fullest possible scope. They channelize the specific skills and influences of the membership. The roster of these committees is an impressively varied one but even more important is the fact that each one is an active, effective unit. The committees represent the considered judgment of the entire membership that the areas in which they function are vitally important and require the maximum effort for improvement.

THE CHAPTER: VARIETY AND UNITY

These are the committees of the New York Chapter, each actively engaged in a different field but working with common goals: a stronger, more efficient and productive chapter; a better, more wholesome and harmonious community.

ARTS develops programs to encourage public interest in art, drama, and literature which promote intergroup understanding and express democratic principles. Has made an award for juvenile books, and is preparing an exhibit of paintings and sculpture to be shown in leading museums and art galleries in the United States under the sponsorship of the American Federation of Arts.

CIVIL RIGHTS PROGRAMS concerns itself with programs for the protection of civil rights and civil liberties. Cooperates with the New York State Commission Against Discrimination in the enforcement of the law to eliminate discrimination in employment. Assists community groups in making civil rights audits. Analyzes laws which affect civil liberties and publicizes the results. Works to eliminate discrimination in resorts and other places of public accommodation, and discriminatory statements in resort advertising.

DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING works to eliminate restrictive covenants and discrimination based on race, creed, or

color in public and publicly assisted housing. Was instrumental in forming the New York State Committee on Discrimination in Housing which carries on a program to eliminate these evils.

HIGHER EDUCATION helped to bring about the present State University of New York and the adoption of the law against discrimination based on race, creed, color or national origin in admissions to colleges and universities. Is engaged in examining discrimination in admission to medical schools and with the view of ultimately eliminating such practices. Works for the expansion of educational facilities and opportunities in higher education.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS organizes and services local groups in tension areas to promote better community living and relations. Assists with neighborhood houses and Police Coordinating Councils. Cooperates with the Board of Education's Division of Community Services in opening and operating school buildings after school hours for recreation. Is a member of the Welfare Council of the City of New York. Works with the Mayor's Committee on Unity to eliminate racial and religious bigotry.

INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS promotes day-to-day relationships with the lay and professional leadership of the Christian faiths to help diminish tensions arising from the creedal differences. Sponsors "The Panel of Americans" in universities—groups of students of different religions and backgrounds are trained to present a panel discussion on prejudice to school, social and civic bodies and audience participation.

PUBLIC SCHOOL AFFAIRS concerns itself with the introduction of intercultural materials in the public schools and maintenance of the principle of the separation of church and state. Cooperates with the Public Education Association and the United Parents Association for the improvement of conditions

in the public schools. Is conducting a study of the school-community coordinator project to evolve methods of making it more effective. Investigates and recommends action on incidents involving bigotry and anti-Semitism in the school system.

EMERGENCY DEFENSE receives information on anti-Semitic manifestations in the New York areas, investigates such incidents and promotes the necessary course of action. Investigated the "Peekskill incident" and advised the community on means for preventing a repetition, as well as assisting in organizing the Jewish community.

DISCUSSION GROUPS conducts discussion groups to aid members to a more complete understanding of the issues of the day. Added groups are now meeting and being formed. Such matters are discussed as: "What shall we teach our children?"; "Social Discrimination: How does it function—What can be done about it?"; "Jewish Behavior and Anti-Semitism"; "The American Promise—can Jews depend upon it?"

MEMBERSHIP seeks a cross section of Jewish community leadership; aims to bring into the Chapter every Jewish communal leader and worker who is in sympathy with the objectives of the American Jewish Committee.

SPEAKERS provides and trains "Committee interpreters" to appear before clubs, lodges, temples and similar institutions to explain the American Jewish Committee program.

COMMENTARY helps to widen the readership of COMMENTARY, a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. COMMENTARY is sponsored by the Committee to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

FINANCE is responsible for the Chapter's participation in fund-raising activities for the work of the American Jewish Committee. Works actively in conjunction with the Joint Defense Appeal, fund-raising instrument of the Committee and the Anti-Defamation League.

PROGRAM AND INTERPRETATION plans the general and membership meetings of the Chapter; arranges the programs and obtains the speakers for such meetings. Issues press releases to publicize the activities and accomplishments of the Chapter. Prepares interpretive materials for distribution to members and the general public and issues and edits a chapter bulletin.

LOCAL DIVISIONS

The New York Chapter is keenly aware that a city as vast as New York is at once an entity, a community in itself, and an area embracing a host of communities. It realizes that in these communities there is a good deal of local pride and initiative and that these communities are faced with unique problems. Therefore, it has sought to afford Chapter members living in different parts of the city, an opportunity to deal with current problems affecting their specific interests, as well as an opportunity for expanded activity, by creating divisions of the Chapter.

The Chapter has established and now operates divisions in Brooklyn, Queens and Westchester. Through these divisions local issues are handled on a local basis in cooperation with the regular Chapter committees. These divisions, for example, deal with the local Jewish Community Councils in matters of common concern; they handle incidents in the local public schools; they conduct their own fireside discussions groups in members' homes. General meetings are also held in the local communities to discuss issues of vital importance.

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347

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